

**Opening Remarks of Chairman Henry J. Hyde
before the Full Committee at a hearing on
“Reforming the United Nations: Budget and Management Perspectives”**

**Thursday, May 19, 2005
2172 Rayburn House Office Building**

The subject of today’s hearing is reform of the United Nations.

Many regard the word “reform” used in relation to the UN with suspicion, viewing it as a vehicle by which the U.S. can surreptitiously inflict intentional damage on an institution unpopular with the American public. But those who would claim an American antipathy to the United Nations are unfamiliar with the history of the organization. The United States was the originator of the idea of the United Nations and its birth parent, as it had been decades before with the League of Nations.

When the U.S. set out to remake the international system at the end of World War II, it focused much of its energy and overwhelming strength on establishing the United Nations, spending time and resources to persuade allies, enemies, and others to sign on to this new and hopeful vision of how the world could work. And through the decades, despite disagreements large and small, we have been the organization’s principal funder, and its steady partner. Our criticism has stemmed not from a reflexive opposition but from repeated disappointment at the UN’s inability or refusal to live up to our high expectations.

No one is opposed to the UN’s role in facilitating diplomacy, mediating disputes, monitoring the peace, feeding the hungry. But we are opposed to legendary bureaucratization, to political grandstanding, to billions of dollars spent on multitudes of programs with meager results, to the outright misappropriation of funds represented by the emerging scandal regarding the Oil-for-Food program. And we rightly bristle at the gratuitous anti-Americanism that has become ingrained over decades.

No observer, be they passionate supporter or dismissive critic, can pretend that the current structure and operations of the UN represent an acceptable standard. Even the UN itself has acknowledged the need for reform and, to its credit, has put forward a number of useful proposals for consideration. But it cannot be expected to shoulder this burden alone. And none who care about the UN would want it to.

The desire for change is a bipartisan one. Republican and Democratic administrations alike have long called for a more focused and accountable budget, one that reflects what should be the true priorities of the organization, shorn of duplicative, ineffective, and outdated programs. Members on both sides of the aisle in Congress agree that the time has come for far-reaching reforms.

Our efforts must address a wide range of activities, including budget priorities and the sprawling array of programs, personnel issues, and management reform, to name but the largest subjects. I could recite a litany of examples of problems that must be addressed, but I will offer only one, namely that, while the UN Public Information Office employs 754 individuals, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has 450.

The task we face is an extensive one, and I have no illusions regarding the difficulties and challenges we face. This Committee will soon take up legislation that will outline U.S. goals and the actions needed to accomplish them, legislation that I am confident will enjoy wide, bipartisan support. I am certain that we shall receive it from all who wish the United Nations to become the institution it was intended to be and to fulfill the mission envisioned by its founders.